



**ONTARIO  
SOCCER**  
EST. 1901

# Participant Safety Policies and Guides

January 2026

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**Definitions Disclaimer**

All definitions related to any of the policies outlined in this document can be found in [Section 1: Policy Document](#).



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## ANTI DOPING POLICY

In addition, the policy is further expanded in the Competition Regulations for Team Ontario - Canada Summer Games participation, Canada Soccer National Championships, Canadian Championships, and the FUTSAL National Championship:

1. All athletes and staff representing Team Ontario at the Canada Summer Games must complete the CCES E-learning: 16True Sport Clean 101 and the Role of Athlete Support Personnel Course located at [www.cces.ca](http://www.cces.ca)
2. All athletes who participate in Canada Soccer's National Championships shall be eligible for unannounced testing. A list of banned substances can be obtained from [www.cces.ca](http://www.cces.ca)
3. Where unannounced testing takes place at a Canada Soccer National Championship competition it will be undertaken in accordance with the CCES protocols. One member of the team staff for all National Championships must have completed the CCES E-learning:
4. 16True Sport Clean 101 and the Role of Athlete Support Personnel Course.
5. In addition for teams participating in the Canada Soccer U-17 Cup, Challenge Trophy/Jubilee Trophy and Masters and FUTSAL Competitions, the team captain must have completed the CCES E-learning and True Sport Clean 101. The online education session is to be completed on the following website: [www.cces.ca](http://www.cces.ca)
6. A copy of the CCES certificate for each of the above listed courses must be submitted to Ontario Soccer and/or Canada Soccer prior to the start of the competition



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## AIR QUALITY

Any decisions on cancellations due to air quality issues rest with the Ontario Soccer Membership Districts. The Districts are to follow advice from their local health organizations and will be making the best decision for their area, and with safety as the driving factor.



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## CASTS & EQUIPMENT

### **Casts**

Hard plaster casts are considered to pose a danger to both the wearer and other players and are not permitted to be worn. The practice of padding a hard plaster cast does not reduce the element of danger.

Players wearing a soft, lightweight, cast will be permitted to play if the cast does not present a danger to the individual or any other player. Such determination will be made by the Match Officials.

Any player who uses a cast to intimidate or injure an opponent shall be cautioned or sent off depending on the nature of the player's action.

### **Other Equipment**

#### ***Orthopaedic Supports (ie. Knee Braces)***

FIFA states that the vast majority of commercially manufactured supports are safe to use. Knee and arm protectors made of soft, lightweight padded material are not considered dangerous. The major concern is not the 'hardness' of the equipment alone, rather that any part of it can cut or wound another player. Any support must be safe for all players, and adequately padded and covered if necessary.

#### ***Prosthetics***

A player wearing a prosthetic device should be allowed to play providing the basic principles of Law 4 are met.

#### ***Wearing Glasses***

Eyeglasses are allowed if they are sports spectacles and are safe for the players themselves and for other players. Match Officials should show tolerance when authorizing their use, particularly for younger players. Materials such as metal or glass are not acceptable. In recreational and house league games Match Officials are expected to show common sense and allow spectacles as long as the basic principles of Law 4 are met.



## CONCUSSION PROTOCOLS

All resources related to concussion protocols, including guidelines, tools, and educational materials, can be accessed through Ontario Soccer's official concussion resource page:

<https://www.ontariosoccer.net/concussion-resources>



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## DRONE POLICY

According to Canada's national aviation authority, Transport Canada Civil Aviation (TCCA), flying a drone is legal in Canada, but we recommend being aware of and compliant with the drone regulations listed below before doing so.

If you'd like to contact TCCA directly before you travel with any questions you might have, here is their contact information: [services@tc.gc.ca](mailto:services@tc.gc.ca) / +1 800 305 2059

### General Rules for Flying a Drone in Canada

The following rules apply to all drone operations:

- All drones that weigh between 250 g and 25 kg must be [registered](#) with Transport Canada. Pilots must mark their drones with their registration number before they fly.
- All pilots of drones that weigh between 250 g and 25 kg must [get a drone pilot certificate](#).
- Fly your drone where you can see it at all times
- Fly below 122 meters (400 feet) in the air
- Fly away from bystanders, at a minimum distance of 30 meters for basic operations
- Do not fly at the site of emergency operations or advertised events
- Avoid forest fires, outdoor concerts, and parades
- Do not fly within 5.6 kilometres (3 nautical miles) from airports or 1.9 kilometres (1 nautical mile) from heliports
- Fly far away from other aircraft
- Do not fly anywhere near airplanes, helicopters, and other drones
- Always respect the privacy of others while flying

Additional rules apply depending on your type of operation. The rules introduce two categories of drone operations: basic and advanced. The categories are based on distance from bystanders and on airspace rules.

### Rules for Basic Drone Operations

In addition to the general rules for flying a drone in Canada, pilots conducting basic drone operations must:

- Pilots conducting basic operations need a Pilot Certificate – Basic Operations
- Be able to show your Pilot Certificate – Basic Operations and proof of registration when you fly

### Rules for Advanced Drone Operations

In addition to the general rules for flying a drone in Canada, pilots conducting advanced drone operations must:



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- Pilots conducting advanced operations need a Pilot Certificate – Advanced Operations. To get this certificate, they must pass the Small Advanced Exam and an in-person flight review. The flight review will assess a pilot’s ability to operate their drone safely.
- Fly with a drone that meets RPAS Safety Assurance standards. A list of drone manufacturers and models rated to be approved for certain advanced operations can be found [here](#).
- Survey the area where you will fly. Take note of any obstacles, such as buildings and power lines.

### **No Drone Zones**

“No drone zones” are areas where it may be unsafe or illegal to fly your drone. When you fly a drone for any reason you should generally not fly:

- around airports and aerodromes
- in busy, populated areas
- in national parks
- over border crossings
- any organization Policy that prohibits you from operating a drone (Ontario Soccer Policy 22)



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## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

### Preamble

1. Communication occurs through both face-to-face interactions and electronic interactions. Electronic communication can happen on any social media platform and on any non-social media platform such as texting, virtual meeting platforms and email.
2. Ontario Soccer recognizes that communication between all Participants should be guided by principles that ensure the physical and psychological safety of the Participants and that maintain and strengthen effective relationships.
3. Ontario Soccer further recognizes that Minor Participants such as players and referees, who are Vulnerable Participants, prefer in many cases to communicate through electronic interaction. Ontario Soccer strives to ensure that the Player and Referee are protected during electronic interactions with Persons in Authority.

### Context

The type and nature of Interpersonal Communication depends on the context in which the communication occurs. Interpersonal Communication may change when different stakeholders are involved and, in the sport sector, may depend on the competition stream (e.g., community recreational level or competitive/high-performance level). For example, expectations surrounding adult-adult communication are different from youth communication (which carries the most risk of maltreatment) and are also different than adult-child communication (may be not almost always interceded by parents/guardians).

Further, a primary goal of the coach-player or advisor-referee relationship in the competitive/high-performance stream is to create a positive and healthy training and competition environment. Whereas the main goal of the coach-player or advisor-referee relationship in the community recreational stream is often administrative or casual.

### Principles

The following principles reflect Ontario Soccer's values and guide this Policy:

- e) Regular communication is an important requirement for nourishing effective and healthy relationships.
- e) Ontario Soccer is committed to the [Responsible Coaching Movement](#) and to making sport safer for everyone, particularly Vulnerable Participants.
- e) Conduct and behavior that occurs in Electronic Communication Media and Social Media – both Public Communication and Interpersonal Communication – is subject to the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.
- e) Persons in Authority must use Electronic Communication and Social Media that are appropriate for the context in which the communication occurs.



- e) An open and observable environment facilitates healthy exchanges among the coach-player, advisor-referee and parent/guardian triangle which is necessary for communication with Vulnerable Participants.

## APPENDIX A

### ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY (Cont'd)

The table below has been developed to guide Persons in Authority in their interactions with participants of various ages in two separate coaching contexts – community recreational and competition/high performance. The table assesses the vulnerability of the participant due to their age, the frequency of contact needed with the participant due to their context, and their risk of maltreatment. The final column of the table determines whether (and how) the Person in Authority should be communicating with their participants on Electronic Communication (“ECM”) and/or Social Media (“SM”). The details provided below is not meant to cover every scenario or communications platform.

In the table below, the ‘Community Recreational’ stream is for Participants who are participating in soccer for their personal enjoyment whereas the ‘Competition/High Performance’ stream is for Participants who want to develop their competitive abilities. The streams are described further by the [Coaching Association of Canada](#). It is expected that the contact needed between Persons in Authority and Player/Referee in the Competition/High Performance stream would be more frequent than in the Community Recreational stream because there is more information to convey to further the participant’s development and a closer relationship between participant and coach/advisor. It is also expected that participants who are 12 years old or younger will have less direct communication with a Person in Authority because their parent/guardian will be more involved in their athletic experience – regardless of stream – Maltreatment includes physical, psychological, and sexual maltreatment, as well as other types of misconduct such as neglect, grooming, retaliation, and other behaviours that are described in [The Universal Code of Conduct \(UCMMS\)](#).

AGE OF PLAYER/REFEREE	COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL STREAM			
	<u>Vulnerability Due to Age</u>	<u>Frequency of Contact Needed</u>	<u>Risk of Maltreatment</u>	<u>Communicate on ECM or SM?</u>
Players 12<	High	Low	Low	No – with few exceptions (Level 1)
13-18	Moderate	Low – Moderate	High	No – with few exceptions (Level 1)
19+	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Yes – with few conditions (Level 4)
AGE OF PLAYER/REFEREE	COMPETITION/HIGH PERFORMANCE STREAM			



	<u>Vulnerability Due to Age</u>	<u>Frequency of Contact Needed</u>	<u>Risk of Maltreatment</u>	<u>Communicate on ECM or SM?</u>
Players 12<	High	Moderate	Low - Moderate	No – with few exceptions (Level 1)
13-18	Moderate	Moderate - High	High	Yes – with many conditions (Level 2)
19+	Low	High	Moderate	Yes – with some conditions (Level 3)

### Guidelines

The following guidelines (**Appendix B**) have been developed:

- d) Ideal Practices – Ideal (best) practices for Persons in Authority when they communicate with participants of different ages and in different levels of play contexts.
- d) Guide for Persons in Authority – Specific tips for Persons in Authority (primarily coaches/advisors) to assist them with their communication in Electronic Communication and Social Media.
- d) Guide for Player/Referee – Specific tips for players and referees to assist them with their communication in Electronic Communication and Social Media.
- d) Guide for Parents – Specific tips for parents/guardians to monitor, participate in, and/or be aware of the communication between Persons in Authority and their children.

### Implementation Plan

A sample implementation plan (**Appendix C**) has been developed to assist Ontario Soccer membership and their coaches, advisors and teams with applying the guidelines described in this Policy.

### General

An individual who believes that a Participant’s Electronic Communication and/or Social Media activity is inappropriate or may violate Ontario Soccer’s policies and procedures should report the matter to their member organization in the manner outlined in the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.

Removing content from Social Media after it has been posted (either publicly or privately) does not excuse the Participant from being subject to the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.

## Appendix B – Ideal Practices and Guidelines

### IDEAL PRACTICES – COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL STREAM



Medium	Participants 12<	Participants 13-18	Participants 19+
	<b>Level 1</b>		<b>Level 4</b>
Email	Do not email Player unless requested. Communicate directly with parents/guardians.		Email Player when necessary.
Text	Do not text Player unless requested. Communicate directly with parents/guardians.		Text Player when necessary.
Facebook	Do not add Player to Facebook. Block friend requests.		Consider accepting or initiating friend requests. Monitor your own content.
Instagram	Do not follow Player on Instagram. Block follow requests.		Consider accepting or initiating follow requests. Monitor your own content.
X	Do not follow Player on X. Block follow requests.		Consider accepting or initiating follow requests. Monitor your own content.
Snapchat	Do not add Player to Snapchat. Block follow requests.		
TikTok	Do not follow Player on TikTok. Block follow requests.		Consider accepting or initiating follow requests. Monitor your own content.
Team Communication Platforms (e.g., TeamSnap)	Do not initiate adding Player to team communication platforms. Consider parent requests to add Player.		Add Player when necessary.

***Ideal Practices – Competition High Performance Stream***

Medium	Participants 12<	Participants 13-18	Participants 19+
	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>
Email	Do not email Player unless requested. Communicate directly with parents/guardians.	Email Player when necessary. Stick to non-personal communication. Alert or copy parents/guardians.	Email Player when necessary.
Text	Do not text Player unless requested. Communicate directly with parents/guardians.	Text Player when necessary. Stick to non-personal communication. Alert or copy parents/guardians.	Text Player when necessary.



Facebook	Do not add Player to Facebook. Block friend requests.	Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public. Inform parents/guardians.	Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public.
Instagram	Do not follow Player on Instagram. Block follow requests.	Do not initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public. Inform parents/guardians.	Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public.
X	Do not follow Player on X. Block follow requests.	Avoid initiating contact. All communication must be public. Inform parents/guardians.	Avoid initiating contact. All communication must be public.
Snapchat	Do not follow Player on Snapchat. Block follow requests.		
TikTok	Do not follow Player on TikTok. Block follow requests.		Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public.
Team Communication Platforms (e.g., TeamSnap)	Do not actively add Player to team communication platforms. Consider parent requests to add Player.	Add Player when necessary. Stick to non-personal communication. Alert or copy parents/guardians.	Add Player when necessary.

## Conditions And Exceptions

### Level 1 – No Communication with Few Exceptions

Under no circumstances should a Person in Authority initiate communication over an Electronic Communication Medium or a Social Medium. Contact initiated by a Participant should be rejected and/or blocked. If a Participant asks a Person in Authority why they have blocked them or rejected their communication, the Person in Authority should explain that communication is preferred either through their parent/guardian or face-to-face. At times, the Person in Authority may wish to report to the parent/guardian that their Participant is using a Social Medium that carries more risk because of the nature of the medium (such as TikTok or Snapchat), in case the parent/guardian is not aware that the Participant is using the medium.

Parents/guardians may request that a Person in Authority communicate directly with their Participant via an Electronic Communication such as texting, email, or TeamSnap. The parent/guardian may rationalize that their child is mature enough to communicate on such a medium and/or should become accustomed to doing so as part of their personal development. In most cases (especially with children



younger than 13 years old), the Person in Authority should reject the request to communicate in this manner. Optionally, the Person in Authority can consider accepting the request with additional safeguards (such as copying the parent/guardian on sent communication and actively sending a log of received communication to the parent/guardian at regular intervals).

### Level 2 – Communication with Many Conditions

Communication at this level has potentially the most risk. Because of the frequency of contact needed with high performance Player, and recognizing that regular communication promotes more effective relationships, Persons in Authority can communicate with Player on Electronic Communication and Social Media but must take several precautions when they do so. Communication should be open and observable whenever possible. If it is not possible to have open and observable communication on a particular medium, Persons in Authority should maintain a log or record of the communication and make it available to their member organization or to the Player’s parent/guardian whenever requested.

To communicate non-personal information, Electronic Communication should be used by Persons in Authority to inform Player and their parents/guardians at the same time. For example, any emails should be copied to a parent/guardian and team communication should include parents/guardians. In some circumstances, non-personal communication can occur on these media without including a parent/guardian (such as a Player informing a coach that they will be late for practice) but parents/guardians must be aware that this communication may occur and they should know that they can ask for it to cease.

Persons in Authority can be available to the participant to receive messages about personal issues on the participant preferred communication medium – but these messages must be logged and available to their member organization and/or to the participant’s parent/guardian. Persons in Authority should avoid initiating contact on Social Media but may accept ‘friend’ or ‘follow’ requests provided any communication that occurs on Social Media is restricted to content and material that furthers the development of the participant’s athletic goals or experience (such as training videos or comments about the sport). These interactions must be Public Communication (not private messaging) and parents/guardians must know that it may occur. A Social Medium that defaults to automatically deleting content after a set time period cannot be used.

### Level 3 – Communication with Some Conditions

At this level, communication on Electronic Communication and Social Media is permitted but Persons in Authority should take some precautions. All communication should be Public Communication, whenever possible, and should be open and observable. However, recognizing that Persons in Authority and participant at this level are adults, communication that is of a personal nature may occur on an Electronic Communication Medium and it is not necessary to copy a second adult. This communication should be logged and available to their member organization if requested.

To protect the integrity of the coach-player or advisor-referee relationship, Persons in Authority should not initiate contact on Social Media. Persons in Authority may accept ‘friend’ or ‘follow’ requests provided any communication that occurs on Social Media is Public Communication (not private messaging). A Social Medium that defaults to automatically deleting content after a set time period (such as Snapchat) should be avoided.



### Level 4 – Communication with Few Conditions

Communication on Electronic Communication Media and Social Media is permitted. A Social Medium that defaults to automatically deleting content after a set time period (such as Snapchat) should be avoided. At this level, both the participant and the Person in Authority are adults and are expected to interact in a positive, professional manner with few restrictions on the nature of their communication. Conduct, messages, and posted content must still adhere to the *Code of Conduct and Ethics*.

### **Guidelines For Persons In Authority**

#### General – All Levels

- a) You must model appropriate behaviour befitting your role and status in connection with your organization.
- b) Ensure you host an information session for parents/guardians and players/referees at the beginning of your season that clearly outlines communication standards and how you will be communicating with the participants throughout the season.
- c) Ensure all electronic and social communication is professional, unambiguous, and on-topic. Avoid emojis and unspecific language that can be interpreted in multiple ways.
- d) Be aware that you may acquire information about a participant that imposes legal mandatory reporting.
- e) Player may search for your Social Media accounts. Be prepared for how you will respond when a participant attempts to interact with you on Social Media.
- f) Annually review and update the privacy settings on all your Social Media accounts.
- g) Consider creating separate Social Media accounts for the express purpose of communicating with Vulnerable Participants. Access should be provided to other Persons in Authority and to your organization so that the accounts are open and observable.
- h) Consider monitoring or being generally aware of participant’s public Social Media behaviour to ensure compliance with the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and this Policy.
- i) Persons in Authority may not demand access to a Player’s private posts.
- j) Do not post pictures or videos of participants on your private Social Media accounts.
- k) Do not post selection decisions and other official business on Social Media.
- l) Never misrepresent yourself by using a fake name or fake profile.
- m) Avoid association with Facebook groups, Instagram accounts, or Twitter feeds with explicit sexual conduct or viewpoints that might offend or compromise your relationship with participants.
- n) Do not delete your communication history with Vulnerable Participants in any medium.
- o) Be prepared to accept your organization (or parents/guardians) may request logs or records of your communication history. Become familiar with some of the methods to save and download messages:
  - a. [Saving and Printing Instagram Messages](#)
  - b. [Download Instagram Messages \(chrome plugin\)](#)
  - c. [Saving Chat History \(WhatsApp\)](#)
  - d. [Transferring iPhone Messages](#)
  - e. [Saving Text Messages](#)



## Level 2

- a) Ensure that parents are aware if some interactions may take place on Social Media and Electronic Communication Media and the context for those interactions.
- b) Attempt to make communication with participants on Electronic Communication and Social Media as one-way as possible. Be available for a participant if they initiate contact – participant may wish to have this easy and quick access to you – but do not impose yourself into a participant’s personal media space.
- c) Never accept communication from one participant while blocking another participant. Be consistent in your use of Social Media to communicate with all participants.
- d) Consider using league and team management applications that allows non-personal communication to occur through the application/website and be directed at both parents/guardians and Vulnerable Participants at the same time.
- e) Do not initiate “friend” or “follow” requests with participants on Facebook. Never pressure participants to “friend” or “follow” you. Consider managing your Social Media so that participants do not have the option to follow you on any platform. Level 3 & Level 4
- f) Choosing not to engage with Social Media is an acceptable strategy. Be prepared to inform participants (and/or parents/guardians) why you will not engage in this space and explain which media you will use to communicate with them.
- g) Never *require* participant to join any social media platform
- h) If you use a Social Medium to communicate, do not make the Social Medium the exclusive location for important information. Duplicate important information in Electronic Communication Media (like on a website or via email).
- i) Exercise appropriate discretion when using Social Media for your own personal communications (with friends, colleagues, and other Persons in Authority) with the knowledge that your behaviour may be used as a model by a Player or Referee.

## General – Virtual Sessions

- a) Video sessions should be recorded, when possible. Recording video sessions documents the interaction and serves to ‘open’ the environment. Your sport organization, the participant and/or a minor participant’s parent/guardian (when applicable) should be permitted to view the recording.
- b) Video sessions with groups of participants (such as a team) must be attended by at least two adults (preferably coaches or advisors). One-on-one video sessions should be either recorded with permission and/or attended by another adult and/or the participant’s parent/guardian (when applicable). No one-on-one video session with a minor participant should take place without a parent/guardian’s knowledge.
- c) Provide a clear statement of professional standards expected of all attending individuals prior to any video session. Provide an outline and agenda of the video session to participants and to the player’s parent/guardian (when applicable) prior to the session. Any breaches of professional standards that occurred during the session must be communicated to parents/guardians of minor participant after the session.



- d) Sessions must not include personal communication and focus on training/coaching.
- e) Video sessions should be held in a professional setting. Your video stream must show a neutral background (avoid bedrooms and bathrooms).
- f) Dress professionally.
- g) Inform your sport organization that you intend to communicate with participants via video session. If you intend to provide instruction or skills training, your organization may need to sanction the session and/or parents/guardians of minor participant may need to sign an agreement or a waiver.

## GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

### General – All Levels

- a) Set your privacy settings to restrict who can search for you and what private information other people can see.
- b) Coaches, advisors teammates, officials, or opposing competitors may all try to add/follow you social platforms . You are not required to follow anyone or be Facebook friends with anyone.
- c) If you are under the age of 18, make sure that your parent/guardian is aware of any Electronic Communication and/or Social Media interactions that you have with your coach or another Person in Authority.
- d) If you feel harassed by someone in an Electronic Communication Media and/or Social Media interaction, report it to your parent/guardian, a Person in Authority, or to your member organization.
- e) You do not have to join any social media platform or account if you do not want to.
- f) Content posted or shared on Social Media, relative to your privacy settings, is considered Public Communication. In most cases, you do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy for any material that you post or share.
- g) Content posted on Social Media is almost always permanent – consider that other individuals may take screenshots of your content (even snapchats) before you can delete them.
- h) Do not posting pictures of, or alluding to, participation in illegal activity or use of banned substances.
- i) Model appropriate behaviour in Social Media befitting your status as a) a Player or Referee, and b) a participant within your member organization and Ontario Soccer. As a representative of your member organization and Ontario Soccer, you have agreed to the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and must follow that Code when you post material and interact with other people through Electronic Communication Media and Social Media.
- j) Be aware that your public Facebook page, Instagram account, or Twitter feed may be reviewed by your coach or another Person in Authority, or by your member organization. Content or behaviour on Social Media relative to your participation in soccer may be subject to sanction under the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.
- k) If you attend a video session, your video stream should show a neutral background

## GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS



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## General

- a) You can request copies of any communication that occurs on Electronic Communication Media between a Person in Authority and your Vulnerable Participant.
- b) You can request that any communication that occurs on Electronic Communication and/or Social Media between a Person in Authority and your Vulnerable Participant be logged and available to you.
- c) You can inform Persons in Authority that they are not permitted to contact your Vulnerable Participant on any (or a specific) Social Medium.
- d) Inform your member organization if a Person in Authority interacted with your Vulnerable Participant in an Electronic Communication Medium or Social Medium without your knowledge.
- e) Inform your member organization if a Person in Authority initiated an interaction with your Vulnerable Participant on a Social Medium.

## Level 1

- a) Accept that Persons in Authority may not feel comfortable communicating with your child on an Electronic Communication Medium. Respect their decision not to communicate with your Vulnerable Participant in this way.

## Level 2 & Level 3

- a) Be aware that participants between the ages of 13 and 18 often prefer to discuss personal and non-personal matters on Electronic Communication Media or Social Media rather than face-to-face.
- b) Consider joining any Public Communication that occurs on a Social Medium between a Person in Authority and your Vulnerable Participant

## **APPENDIX C – IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The following implementation plan describes how an organization can adopt the *Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy*. A sample script related to communication and a communication consent form are also provided. Organizations and their coaches will want to modify the implementation plan to match their sport context (e.g., age of Player, competition level) and align with the organization's values.

### **Coaches and Teams: Adhering to the *Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy***

This policy may require a change in behaviour from what is occurring now. All stakeholders should be reminded of the value of the Policy and its overall purpose to protect Player and safeguard coaches, while continuing healthy relationships.

### **Coaches and Teams: Modifying Pre-Season Briefing Script and Communication Consent Form**



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This basic script can be used by coaches at a meeting with players and parents/guardians (when applicable) at the beginning of each season or when the Policy is implemented:

*“Our organization has approved an Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy which has been communicated to you in advance of this meeting. The overall intention of the Policy is to protect Player and continue to develop healthy communication strategies between Player and coaches. As a certified coach, it is important to me that we all communicate effectively and safely.*

*The Policy describes several ‘Levels’ of context that inform the guidelines for communication between Persons in Authority and Player. Our context would be considered a [insert level] because we are a [competitive or recreational] group consisting of players who are [age of Player] years old.*

*The coaching staff has reviewed the guidelines for our level. We have decided that we will [describe whether coaches will accept certain contact on which media + which media they will be used to communicate]*

**Sample:** *We will not accept friend or follow requests from players on social media – but I will accept players who follow me on X because I ‘like’ and ‘forward content that can assist with Player development. Parents are encouraged to follow me too. Primarily, we will use X to communicate information, but parents should text me in emergencies or if the Player will be late to a competition.*

**Sample:** *Since the players are 17 years old, we have decided that we will accept friend and follow requests on Instagram and X. But please do not send us direct messages on these accounts because we will not respond. We also have a YouTube channel where we post skills videos and Player are encouraged to follow that channel. If a parent does not want us interacting with your Player in these spaces – please let me know. I prefer to use email to send messages, but I will also text players or parents if I need information quickly. I do not delete text messages and I provide my communication history to our Technical Director at the end of the competition season or when requested.*

**Sample:** *Since you are all older than 19 years old, and you all have high performance competitive goals, we intend to communicate with you as adults. We have therefore decided to accept communication in your preferred medium – you can reach me on Facebook messenger, Instagram messenger, text, email, or WhatsApp and I will respond quickly. But recognizing that the coaches are your coaches – I will be using WhatsApp as my primarily communication medium and I would encourage everyone to join our WhatsApp group. For those who do not use WhatsApp, I will be duplicating all important information in regular emails.*

*If anyone has any questions about our approach to Electronic Communication Media and Social Media, or about this Policy, please let me know and I will set up a meeting with you and ask someone else from our organization to join us.”*



This communication consent form may be used by Persons in Authority to acquire consent from parents/guardians of participants who are younger than 18 years old:

### SAMPLE Communication Consent Form

Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. I, being the parent or legal guardian of the minor Participant, hereby grant to [insert names of Persons in Authority] ("Persons in Authority") the permission to contact the Participant as follows:

[insert nature of contact]

*Sample: Through TeamSnap, Email, and Text for all types of communication and through direct messages on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, and through Public Communication posts on any Social Medium.*

*Sample: Through Text, only in emergencies*

2. I understand that I may request to see a log or record of any communication that occurs on Electronic Communication Media and/or Social Media.
3. I understand that I may request that the Person in Authority cease communicating with the Participant on any Social Medium.
4. **I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE** that I have read and understood the terms and conditions of this document and that I have been provided with the *Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy*. On behalf of myself, my heirs and assigns, I agree that I am signing this document voluntarily.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_



## FREE STANDING VIDEOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT

Free Standing Videography Equipment is defined as self supportive video equipment used to record soccer games and training sessions managed by Ontario Soccer or by affiliated Leagues, Clubs or Teams within Ontario Soccer. The use of video recording equipment and the safe handling of this equipment at Ontario Soccer sanctioned events is an important health and safety consideration.

Equipment must be secured and owners must adhere to the manufacturers' instructions when securing the equipment for use. While outdoors, equipment must be secured in place and must not be left unsupervised. Outdoors, equipment must not be used in inclement weather. Indoor use is at the sole discretion of each facility. If permitted, equipment must be secured in place and positioned in a way not to pose a hazard to players, coaches, or spectators, and must not be left unsupervised.

Equipment owners are responsible for adhering to all protocols for the use of videography equipment applicable to the facility or permitted field, whether Municipal or privately owned.



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## HEAT RELATED INJURY PREVENTION

### Proper Hydration to Avoid and prevent heat related injuries when playing soccer

There are some simple guidelines which have been prepared by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) when it comes to running activities in a hot and/or humid environment. The goal in participating in hot weather is to avoid fluid loss from the body or dehydration. Water not only accounts for some 98% of our body composition, but functions to help deliver oxygen to working muscles, and keeps the body from overheating during strenuous activity. Hard working muscles generate heat which is dissipated through the act of sweating. Evaporation of sweat on the skin allows the body to get rid of this heat and cool it off. In looking at the objectives for advising officials and participates about this subject it seems that the following categories are areas requiring attention:

1. To educate athletes and event officials about the most common forms of environmental illness including predisposing conditions, warning signs, susceptibility and incidence reduction.
2. To advise officials of their legal responsibilities and potential liability with regard to event safety and injury prevention
3. To recommend that officials consult local weather archives and plan games at times likely to be of low environmental stress to minimize detrimental effects on athletes.
4. To encourage officials to warn athletes about environmental stress on game/practice day and the implications for heat and cold illness.
5. To inform officials of preventive actions that may reduce debilitation and environmental illness.
6. To describe the personnel, equipment, and supplies necessary to reduce and treat cases of collapse and environmental illness.

To this end, after review of the available literature and after consultation of various medical authorities and officials it was felt that the following recommendations are some key guidelines for soccer participation in the heat:

1. Avoid dehydration and make sure you pre-hydrate: Don't wait till you feel thirsty because the body will not be able to tell you in time that you are dehydrated, here are some practical recommendations:
  - a. 2 hours before exercise, drink at least 16 oz or 500 ml (an average bottle of water)
  - b. 1 hour before exercise, drink at least 8 oz or 250 ml (half an average bottle of water)
  - c. During the exercise, drink at least 4 to 8 oz every 15 - 20 minutes
  - d. Immediately after the exercise, drink at least 16 oz or 500 ml of water or an electrolyte replacing drink
  - e. 1 hour after a training session or game consider drinking 16 oz or 500 ml of skim milk or chocolate milk for protein and muscle repair
2. As a general rule of thumb you should drink at least 500 ml for every 20 lbs of body weight, therefore, someone weighing 140 lbs needs to drink at least 3500 ml of fluids per day if training or playing that day
3. Drinking carbohydrate and electrolyte fluids may be beneficials in avoiding heat trauma.
4. Wearing light breathable clothing is advised.



5. Officials should be very cautious in authorizing games and practices in environments where the temperature plus humidity combined are 35 C and over. They should inquire of the participants to ensure pre-event hydration, medication use and susceptibility to heat injury (prior occurrence). Also unlimited substitution is recommended during games as is frequent fluid breaks and fluid availability on both sides of the field.
6. Warning flags could be posted on the field as follows:
  - green - proceed with caution heat stress possible
  - amber - moderate risk to heat stress
  - red - high risk to potential heat stress

If used they should be posted at locations easily seen by participants, support staff, medical staff and spectators.

The other issue to consider is, and you may be asking yourself at this point, what are the risk factors which could predispose a soccer player to heat injury. Listed below are the major risk factors but this is by no means an exhaustive list:

1. Not being acclimatized
2. Unfit
3. Hypo hydration
4. Hyper hydration
5. Use of a variety of medications or supplements
6. Persons with persistent, disabling mental illness
7. Certain medical conditions (cardiac, lung)

How can you tell if one of your soccer players is experiencing heat injury? Below is a list of the early warning signs to look for and again this is not an exhaustive list:

1. Flushed face
2. Hyperventilation or shortness of breath
3. Headache
4. Dizziness
5. Tingling arms
6. Goose bumps (hair on arms standing on end)
7. Chilliness
8. Poor coordination
9. Confusion, agitation, uncooperativeness

A preseason or pre-event conditioning program, when combined with an 8 - 14 day period of acclimatization, may further reduce the risk of heat injury.



**There are 3 main types of heat injury identified in the medical literature:**

**1.Heat Cramps** - these are the mildest form of heat trauma and are commonly related to low body sodium and chloride levels.

Signs & Symptoms include - weakness, muscle cramps, collapse with low blood pressure.

Treatment - is aimed at replacing the salt loss and can be oral or by intravenous if vomiting is a problem. Having athletes put a little extra salt on their food the day before and day of game can be a helpful way to avoid this condition.

**2.Heat Exhaustion** - this is a more severe medical event as follows.

Signs & Symptoms include - weakness, irritability, collapse, unable to sweat adequately to promote body cooling, may proceed in the more ominous heat stroke and a fine rash is often present.

Treatment - remove athlete to a cooler environment, use ice baths, fans.

**3.Heat Stroke** - THIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY - it is due to a failure of the heat-controlling mechanism. It may occur merely as a result of exposure to heat.

Signs & Symptoms include - mental confusion, headache, poor coordination, delirium, convulsions and death. The body temperature may be 106 F or 40.5 C or higher, the skin is usually hot and dry as the sweating mechanism has failed.

Treatment - Call 911 and transport to a local Hospital. Rapid cooling is the goal using wet towels, spray mist, sponge baths and removal from the heat. This condition could cause the athlete to go into shock and coma may follow so immediate medical attention is required.

Reference: American College of Sports Medicine POSITION STAND. Exercise and Fluid Replacement, Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, 2007

Acknowledgements: Dr. Rudy Gittens Past Medical Director, Canada Soccer



## JEWELLERY AND HEAD COVERS

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous.

All items of jewellery (necklaces, rings, bracelets, earrings, leather bands, rubber bands, etc.) are forbidden and must be removed. Using tape to cover jewellery is not permitted.

The players must be inspected before the start of the match and substitutes before they enter the field of play. If a player is wearing or using unauthorised/dangerous equipment of jewellery the referee must order the player to:

- Remove the item
- Leave the field of play at the next stoppage if the player is unable or unwilling to comply.

A player who refuses to comply or wears the item again must be cautioned.

### Head Covers

Where head covers (excluding goalkeeper's caps) are worn, they must:

- Be of same colour as the jersey or black (all players should match)
- Be in keeping with the professional appearance of the players equipment
- Not be attached to the jersey
- Not pose any danger to the player wearing it or any other player (e.g. opening/closing mechanism around neck)
- Not have any part(s) extending out from the surface (protruding elements)
- Wearing of turbans/patkas/keski are permitted
- The head covering must be safe and must not pose danger to the wearer or other participants.



## LIGHTNING SAFETY / SEVERE WEATHER

### When thunder roars, go indoors!

The safety of players, coaches, management and spectators is the primary concern in any weather event that occurs during all matches sanctioned by Ontario Soccer and Canada Soccer. By understanding and following the below information, the safety of everyone shall be greatly increased. Ultimately, the Match Official has the final say over delaying or restarting a match due to weather. Waiting to stop play or not waiting to start play may result in a serious injury or loss of life. Match Officials are expected to act responsibly when dealing with such events during matches they are controlling

If you can hear thunder, you can get hit by lightning. As soon as you hear thunder, quickly get to a safe location. More people are struck before and after a thunderstorm than during one. Stay inside for 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder.

### Additional Information

Please note the following recommendations from Environment Canada: Source: <https://weather.gc.ca/lightning/>

- **To plan for a safe day, check the weather forecast first.** If thunderstorms are forecast, avoid being outdoors at that time or make an alternate plan. Identify safe places and determine how long it will take you to reach them.
- **Watch the skies for developing thunderstorms and listen for thunder.** As soon as you hear thunder, quickly get to a safe location. If you can hear thunder, you are in danger of being hit by lightning. More people are struck before and after a thunderstorm than during one.
- **Get to a safe place.** A safe location is a fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning. If no sturdy building is close by, get into a metal-roofed vehicle and close all the windows.
- **Do not handle electrical equipment, telephones or plumbing.** These are all electrical conductors. Using a computer or wired video game system, taking a bath or touching a metal window frame all put you at risk of being struck by lightning. Use battery-operated appliances only.
- **If caught outdoors far from shelter, stay away from tall objects.** This includes trees, poles, wires and fences. Take shelter in a low-lying area but be on the alert for possible flooding.

Be aware of how close lightning is occurring. Thunder always accompanies lightning, even though its audible range can be diminished due to background noise in the immediate environment and its distance from the observer.

When larger groups are involved, the time needed to properly evacuate an area increases. As time requirements change, the distance at which lightning is noted and considered a threat to move into the area must be increased.

Know where the closest “safe structure or location” is to the field or playing area and know how long it takes to get to that safe structure or location. Safe structure or location is defined as:



- Any building normally occupied or frequently used by people, i.e., a building with plumbing and/or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure. Avoid using shower facilities for safe shelter and do not use the showers or plumbing facilities during a thunderstorm.

In the absence of a sturdy, frequently inhabited building, any vehicle with a hard metal roof (not a convertible or golf cart) and rolled-up windows can provide a measure of safety. A vehicle is certainly better than remaining outdoors. It is not the rubber tires that make a vehicle a safe shelter, but the hard metal roof which dissipates the lightning strike around the vehicle. Do not touch the sides of any vehicle.

If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of the feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head.

Minimize contact with the ground because lightning current often enters a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike. Minimize your body's surface area and the ground. Do not lie flat. If unable to reach safe shelter, stay away from the tallest trees or objects such as light poles or flag poles), metal objects (such as fences or bleachers), individual trees, standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid being the highest object in a field. Do not take shelter under a single, tall tree. Avoid using the telephone, except in emergency situations. People have been struck by lightning while using a land-line telephone. A cellular phone or a portable remote phone is a safe alternative to land-line phones, if the person and the antenna are located within a safe structure or location, and if all other precautions are followed.

When considering resumption of any athletics activity, wait at least thirty (30) minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field.

### **First aid for lightning victims**

Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning strikes.

- **Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and can be safely handled.**
- **Call for help.** Victims may be suffering from burns or shock and should receive medical attention immediately. Call 9-1-1 or your local ambulance service.
- **Give first aid.** If breathing has stopped, administer cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Use an automatic external defibrillator if one is available.



## MEDIA AND PHOTOGRAPHY

### Video Recording

Ontario Soccer permits video recording of soccer games provided the use of the recording is not used for commercial gains. Filming soccer games (any competition associated to Ontario Soccer) for commercial gain, requires the written approval of all participants. The permission of the opposing team or league is not required.

Ontario Soccer permits sanctioned leagues to have the authority to have their own privacy policy and its own rules regarding the video recording of games. Limitations in this regard should be applied consistently, however enforcement of such a limitation in a public facility is at the discretion of the league.

### Photography

Ontario Soccer permits sanctioned leagues to have the authority to have their own privacy policy and its own rules regarding the photography of games. Limitations in this regard should be applied consistently, however enforcement of such a limitation in a public facility is at the discretion of the league.



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## MOVEABLE SOCCER GOALS

All resources related to the safe use and handling of moveable soccer goals can be found in **Section VII: Facility and Equipment Safety** of the *Canada Soccer Guide to Safety*. Please access the guide through the following link:

[CanadaSoccer\\_Guide\\_Safety\\_EN.pdf](#)



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## PREGNANCY – PLAYING WHILE PREGNANT

Ontario Soccer is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable environment for all participants. Soccer is a physical activity to which you acknowledge when you sign the Ontario Soccer Registration form and waiver. Ontario Soccer advises that players who are pregnant and wanting to continue to play soccer throughout their pregnancy, should consult a physician before engaging in the sport.

As long as players are aware of the risks involved, the decision to play is entirely theirs.

### **A Player should:**

- Be aware that their health and that of their unborn child is of the utmost importance
- Seek expert medical advice associated to playing while pregnant
- Use common sense and do not take unnecessary risks

### **Clubs and Leagues should:**

- Do their due diligence in providing a safe and enjoyable playing environment for all
- Apply all policies, procedures and rules equally
- Consider and maintain the privacy of the pregnant participant
- Seek advice where necessary from a higher governing organization if there are any items of uncertainty

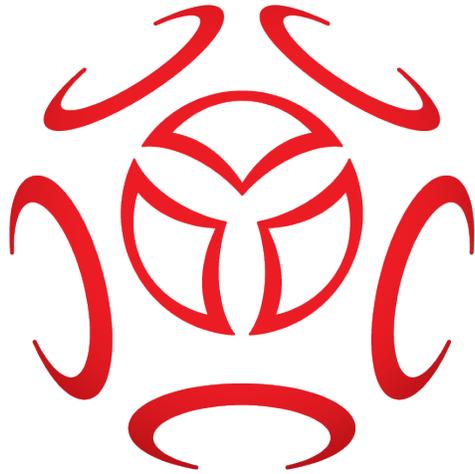


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